



**REMARKS FOR CARL T. JOHNSON
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COUNCIL ON SAFE TRANSPORTATION OF HAZARDOUS ARTICLES
2008 ANNUAL FORUM & EXPO
ST. PETERSBURG, FL
-- MARCH 11, 2008 --**

Thank you Bill, for that wonderful introduction and to each of you in the audience for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

On behalf of the Bush Administration, Secretary Mary Peters, and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), I remind you that your support, assistance and commitment in serving as our partners are greatly appreciated. We thank you for all you do to enhance public safety, security, and environmental protection during your day-to-day operations.

It is somewhat noteworthy that just last year I was President of the Compressed Gas Association, and like you I listened to then PHMSA Administrator and acting DOT Deputy Secretary Tom Barrett's vision for a successful continued PHMSA-industry relationship that embraced many organizations, including COSTHA.

Today – I'm on the other side of the aisle talking to the people responsible for the movement of the 1.2 million daily shipments of hazardous materials the American public relies on. It is such a welcoming sight to see so many of the familiar faces I knew before assuming my new role. I am just as eager to work with you now as I was then.

I am really energized about this appointment. –my formal swearing was just last week. Shortly after I assumed my new role as administrator, a PHMSA staff member asked me what I wanted to accomplish as the agency's newly appointed chief.

Of course having familiarity with the agency and what it does, the question was relatively easy to answer, and some of it is already captured in our agency's strategic plan. But, I must say I was concerned about how much there is to do... and the time to get it accomplished is extremely short.

I know this year will be over quickly, but as Vice President Cheney pointed out to federal employees this past Tuesday, the last year of a presidential administration can be as productive as the first. He speaks from experience, having been part of a number of them.

The good thing is, PHMSA is a remarkable agency with a dedicated staff of professionals and has retained great relationships with its industry partners, such as COSTHA and its members. That will help us build a record of accomplishment in the short time-frame available.

What I'd like to do today, is highlight a few priority areas and tell you what we're doing. Secretary Peters has made it clear that safety will continue to be the Department's number one priority. I don't need to tell you that this will be my foremost focus as PHMSA Administrator as well. My intent is to build upon PHMSA's efforts to achieve the Secretary's goals and improve hazardous materials and pipeline transportation safety and security.

While the word "pipeline" in our name already sets us apart from other DOT agencies, our hazardous materials program makes us even more unique. The hazmat program gives us cross-modal responsibilities where our sister agencies may focus solely on a single mode. This is a major reason why it's important for us to continue to build on our enterprise strategy by strengthening our relationships with you and other PHMSA stakeholders.

The PHMSA "Enterprise Approach" to solving problems involves not only coming together with other Federal agencies such as Homeland Security, Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, or State and Local governments, but also our industry partners - - and all working together to enhance safety.

We know the majority of companies want to do the right thing. Our enforcement programs are working to identify, deter and penalize violators of hazmat and pipeline safety regulations. But enforcement alone is not enough.

To get the job done, it is important that our expectations are clear and fair and that they maximize our return on safety. We are an agency that is committed to building consensus among those we regulate, as well as other government agencies with oversight responsibility over hazardous materials and energy pipelines.

Standards developed in consensus can be a tremendous benefit to industry and government. PHMSA's technical staff routinely participates in the deliberations of industry standards setting groups. This type of constructive participation allows you as industry experts to assist us in developing rules and regulations that are consistent with our safety mission and helps develop safety policies and sound regulations that benefit the industry and the public.

Then there's international harmonization. We need to be aware of the changes that are taking place globally to keep us from being left in the dust. International commerce is here to stay and businesses have to keep up with both domestic and international standards.

Aligning the Hazardous Materials Regulations with international standards promotes greater flexibility, reduces the need for special permits, and streamlines compliance and undue industry costs - it also enhances safety. It's imperative for PHMSA to continue our efforts in promoting the implementation of consistent regulations for the global movement of hazardous materials.

This brings me to the problem we're facing with undeclared hazmat shipments across all transportation modes. We need to push further in reaching our goal of eliminating this risk, an area where COSTHA has been a huge partner.

Since the PHMSA-COSTHA agreement in 2006, we've been working hard to better assess the impact of undeclared hazmat on public safety. Our workshops and meetings are proving beneficial in garnering input from industry and helping us to improve training and outreach efforts to enhance awareness and transportation safety. With COSTHA as a partner, we are well on our way to controlling this problem and seeing astounding results.

When we examine the data on accidents involving the loading and unloading of hazardous materials, I think we all agree that the introduction of a performance standard could dramatically enhance safety. We've reviewed the proposals of interested parties and participated in facilitated workshops to discuss best practices. We are working diligently to follow-up our Federal Register notice and plan to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking by the end of the year.

Recurring incidents involving lithium battery fires and overheating on airlines are sparking a rising concern about the safety of air travelers. PHMSA is pursuing efforts to strengthen standards for lithium battery testing requirements and transportation on passenger aircraft. Our PHMSA/industry campaign committed to education and outreach on how to travel safely with lithium batteries is working, but we need to do more.

Another area that I'm deeply committed to is finding and adding to the number of qualified hazmat professionals. It's understood that we all expect to retire one day. The decline in dedicated hazmat experts in government and industry is a serious concern. We need to train and identify new and retain current competent professionals with knowledge of the hazmat field.

I commend the PHMSA-COSTHA partnership on finding ways to do this with strong campaigns focused on working with colleges and universities, professional associations and others to heighten the awareness and importance of hazmat careers in the global business community.

Finally, in addition to all I have just mentioned, reauthorization of PHMSA's hazardous materials safety program is long overdue. I plan to have a Hazmat reauthorization proposal drafted and ready to move this spring. We will be looking to expand PHMSA's authority to enhance our mission capabilities and protect the public and the communities we live and work in.

With all of the priorities I just mentioned and more, we will rely on the well-established and successful PHMSA-COSTHA partnership to assist us. Our recent Strategic Plan addresses safety in pipeline and hazmat program issues, emergency response, and public outreach. Now it's time to implement the plan and deliver results.

As we move along, we will always welcome input from our stakeholders to tell us if we're headed in the right direction. We have learned that we can multiply the success of our efforts to improve safety by sharing responsibility and accomplishments with our stakeholders, both within the federal family, and the members COSTHA represents.

With your insight and input, we can continue to ensure that key transportation safety programs, and the issues surrounding them, get the attention they deserve. Together, we can keep the nation's hazmat moving safely, and move our economy to new heights.

All of us at PHMSA and across the Department of Transportation stand ready, and willing, to work with you and are proud to be your partners in hazmat safety.

Thank you again for having me today.

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